



County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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WILLIAM T FUJIOKA
Chief Executive Officer

August 7, 2013

To: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

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FIFTH STATUS REPORT ON THE CHILD CARE POLICY FRAMEWORK

On March 29, 2011, the Board adopted the updated Child Care Policy Framework and a series of related recommendations. As a part of that action, the Office of Child Care, located within the Service Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office, was directed to provide status reports in July and January of each year through 2013. This is the fifth status report on the implementation of the Child Care Policy Framework, covering the period of January 1 through June 30, 2013, and is organized by the goals of the Child Care Policy Framework.

Goal 1. The quality of child development services in Los Angeles County will be improved as the Steps to Excellence Project (STEP) is expanded and support services to STEP participants are intensified.

The Office of Child Care is currently operating two child care quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS), with the goal of merging into a single countywide QRIS on or before December 2015. The STEP QRIS is currently funded by Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP); the County has a multi-year grant agreement with LAUP totaling \$7,682,101 and runs through August 2016. The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) QRIS is a Federal grant awarded to the California Department of Education (CDE) to support local QRIS activities in 16 California counties. The County has a multi-year grant agreement with the CDE that shall not exceed \$5,149,500 and runs through December 2015.

STEP

STEP, our original and locally developed QRIS, currently has 245 licensed child care and development programs enrolled. Participation in STEP is open to both child care and development centers and family child care homes serving children from birth to five years of age. During the 2012-13 Fiscal Year (FY), a total of 158 programs received quality ratings. In addition, 58 Quality Improvement Grants (QI Grants), totaling \$268,000, were distributed.

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QI Grants are issued to STEP participants following their preliminary rating. This rating, which establishes the program's baseline quality, identifies areas where resources are needed to improve program quality. Despite being capped at just under \$5,000, these grants have proven to be an important recruitment tool and have supported the participation of programs that have less access to resources, including but not limited to family child care homes. Financial incentives linked directly to quality standards are considered to be a core element of QRIS.

STEP is currently one of seven projects that comprises the LAUP Early Childhood Workforce Consortium. STEP was originally projected to rate 200 programs per year. Program infrastructure took some time to build to scale up to the required volume of ratings and the majority of STEP ratings were completed in the second half of FY 2012-13. LAUP's FY 2013-14 budget development occurred early in 2013 and resulted in capped growth during the remainder of FY 2012-13 and into the future FY to maintain budgetary compliance. Approximately 32 programs scheduled for a rating were deferred to FY 2013-14. STEP has been funded to rate a total of 125 programs in FY 2013-14.

STEP received national recognition this year and was featured in the American Institutes for Research's forthcoming *Local Quality Improvement Efforts & Outcomes Descriptive Study* as one of three¹ QRIS in the state of California that had all six elements typical of a robust QRIS.

RTT- ELC

Between February through May of 2013, the Office of Child Care recruited 184 child care and development programs to participate in the RTT-ELC QRIS. While this slightly exceeds our target of 175 participants, we do anticipate that there will be some attrition over the next two years. We are very pleased to report that 48 of these programs have received a preliminary rating, using the RTT-ELC rating matrix and quality standards. The remaining RTT-ELC participants will receive their preliminary rating in 2013-14.

We recently learned that CDE has been awarded a supplemental grant of \$22,427,065, bringing the Federal funding for California's RTT-ELC to 75 percent of the original request. As this award was announced at the end of June 2013, CDE has not yet finalized how the additional funds will be used.

The Office of Child Care will present at a September meeting of the Children and Families Well-Being Cluster that will include information on the quality of child care and development programs participating in both STEP and RTT-ELC.

Goal 2. Local, State and Federal policies and budgets will strengthen the child development infrastructure and support the expansion of high quality child development services that integrate family support, health, mental health and other relevant services into their operations.

¹ The other two QRIS systems are located in El Dorado and Nevada counties.

The Policy Roundtable for Child Care, in conjunction with the Child Care Planning Committee, has carefully monitored State and Federal legislation and budget issues. Upon vetting those issues at Roundtable meetings, recommendations for pursuits of positions have been submitted to the Intergovernmental and External Affairs unit within the Chief Executive Office. As a result of these requests, the County has taken support positions on AB 274 (Bonilla) and SB 192 (Liu). If passed, AB 274 will create greater efficiencies in the administration of subsidized child care and development services, particularly in the Alternative Payment (AP) Program. SB 192 is a major bill and includes the following components:

- Replaces "Child care and development with "early learning and education support" in the Education Code;
- Streamlines the contracting process for center based services to young children;
- Ensures that parents receive consumer education related to selecting high quality early learning services; and
- Augments the methodology for determining priorities for funding early learning services with Academic Performance Index rankings.

Governor Jerry Brown signed California's budget package for 2013-14 on June 27, 2013. This budget is intended to launch a multi-year balanced plan that reduces California's debt while maintaining a \$1.1 billion reserve. The \$96.3 billion State spending plan emphasizes restructuring K-12 education finance, reinvesting in State universities, and expanding Medi-Cal coverage under Federal health care reform. Additionally, the budget package demonstrates modest efforts at re-investing in safety net programs, which have experienced cumulative reductions over the past four years. The Policy Roundtable for Child Care Policy Brief on the State budget is attached (Attachment I), providing additional details.

In general, the child care and development sector applauded the Governor's decisions to backfill reductions resulting from sequestration and to pass on the proposal to realign child care services to the counties. There was less support for his maintaining parent-fees for State Preschool programs. CDE is preparing a report to the Legislature on the amount of parent fees collected from low-income families whose children are enrolled in this largely part-day, part-year program, the administrative costs of determining eligibility, collecting and tracking those fees, as well as the number of low-income children who lose access to this program because parents are unable to pay the fees.

At the Federal level, the Roundtable is monitoring the President's proposal to expand early care and education services and the proposed regulations governing the Child Care and Development Fund. These regulations would introduce a new and much needed emphasis on health and safety standards, quality, and consumer education to the Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant.

Goal 3. County departments will work collaboratively with each other and community partners to maximize the utilization of available resources, support quality improvements and promote the delivery of integrated services for children and their families.

“Dads and Family Day” took place on May 18, 2013, sponsored by the Los Angeles County Office of Education-Head Start, LAUP, First 5 LA and the Office of Child Care. Over 500 people attended including dads, moms and a good number of young children. This event, which took place on Los Angeles Unified School District's Robert F. Kennedy campus, was designed to welcome dads and promote their involvement in the early education of their young children. In addition to music, soccer clinics and building activities, the children and families left with information on services, backpacks, books and music CDs.

Goal 4. County departments will work collaboratively with the Los Angeles County Office of Education, key school districts and community-based child development services to integrate services, thereby supporting effective:

- Articulation between child development and kindergarten;
- Design of developmentally appropriate transitional kindergarten programs; and
- Identification and utilization of new or nontraditional funding.

The Policy Roundtable for Child Care has been monitoring funding decisions related to Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Funding for Head Start and Early Head Start programs has become increasingly important as California's investment in child care and development services has been reduced. The first cohort of Head Start and Early Head Start funded agencies was announced on July 2, 2013, but funding amounts are not yet available.

Stable funding for child care and development services is critical to both maintaining services and to efforts to build innovative collaborations. The Roundtable will continue to monitor these developments.

Goal 5. The Chief Executive Office (CEO) will facilitate County department efforts to work internally, across departments and with community partners, to integrate the Strengthening Families Approach (SFA) and Protective Factors into their work with children, families, and communities; and engage families in high quality child development services. The CEO, with assistance from the Center for the Study of Social Policy and key local partners, will establish a multidisciplinary SFA learning community designed to support ongoing professional development and SFA projects that are underway or emerging in County departments.

The Strengthening Families Learning Community (SFLC), comprised of County departments and community-based organizations serving young children and their families, has established a quarterly meeting schedule during which it is engaged in a process of examining our collective practices that contribute to overall child and family well-being. The SFLC is looking forward to new collaborative opportunities with First 5 LA and each of the 14 Best Start Communities. On June 26, 2013, the Commission adopted the “Building Stronger Families” framework. This framework builds on the SFA and incorporates the Protective Factors into the core family results. At their September 12, 2013 meeting, the Commission will consider how this framework will guide funding decisions for Countywide activities.

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A copy of the most recent Learning Community Newsletter, with an article featuring First 5 LA's renewed commitment to its Best Start communities, is attached (Attachment II) for your information.

Conclusion

Significant strides have been made in expanding child care quality rating and improvement systems in Los Angeles County. While progress in the other goal areas has been more incremental, those accomplishments have been made during a period of fiscal crisis. I am confident that as "reinvestments are made to safety net programs," the work initiated under the Child Care Policy Framework will inform and expedite the integration of services in this County.

Should your staff have any questions regarding this report, they can contact Antonia Jiménez at (213) 974-7365 or via e-mail at ajimenez@ceo.lacounty.gov.

WTF:AJ
KMS:km

Attachments



County of Los Angeles
Policy Roundtable for Child Care

Policy Brief

ATTACHMENT I



July 5, 2013

**GOVERNOR SIGNS 2013-14 STATE BUDGET
CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

Overview

On June 27, 2013, Governor Jerry Brown signed the budget package for 2013-14, which reflects a multiyear balanced plan, continues to reduce budgetary debt and maintains a \$1.1 billion reserve. The budget is comprised of a \$96.3 State spending plan with an emphasis on restructuring K-12 education finance, reinvesting in state universities, and expanding Medi-Cal coverage under Federal health care reform. Additionally, the budget package demonstrates modest efforts at re-investing in safety net programs, which have experienced cumulative reductions over the past four years.¹

The remainder of this policy brief summarizes the 2013-14 State budget plan as it pertains to child care and development services.

Child Care and Development Budget Items

Overall, the budget for 2013-14 begins to restore funding for child care and development services. According to Early Edge California, the budget reflects a \$50.8 million reinvestment - \$15.8 million to backfill sequestration reductions, \$25.0 million increase in State Preschool, and \$10.0 million to expand non-CalWORKs child care.² Specifically, the budget package:

- Backfills an estimated \$15.8 million of Federal sequestration reductions with a like amount of General Fund as follows: \$11.1 million for General Child Development programs, \$4.2 million for Alternative Payment (AP) programs and \$0.6 million for Migrant Day Care.³
- Allows for shifting any unspent CalWORKs Stage 2 funds to CalWORKs Stage 3 if funding is insufficient to support the estimated caseload.⁴
- Re-appropriates \$10.0 million in unspent child care program funds from 2012-13 to 2013-14 to establish additional slots in the following programs: \$7.0 million for General Child Development programs, \$2.6 million for AP programs, and \$0.4 million for Migrant Day Care.⁵

The Governor exercised his line item veto authority by:

- Eliminating the appropriation that would have required the California Department of Education to develop a preschool plan based on a Federal proposal for universal preschool. In part, the Governor's veto message declared "The state does not have sufficient funds to support a universal preschool, and the Federal government has not adopted funding for implementation of a universal preschool program involving states."⁶
- Reducing the budget for State Preschool by \$50.0 million from \$511.9 million to \$506.9 million. The Governor's veto message stated "With this reduction, funding will be \$25.0 million higher in the budget year, providing for increased preschool slots consistent with the \$25.0 million augmentation I sustained for increased child care slots. While I am sustaining this augmentation for the preschool program, I am doing so on a one-time basis. Providing this increase on an ongoing basis would reduce future resources available for K-14 programs."⁷

Table 1 provides budget detail for items relating to child care and development services.

Table 1. Comparison between 2012-13 Budget and Budget Act of 2013			
Programs	2012-13 Budget ^{8,9}	Budget Act of 2013 ¹⁰	Variance
Proposition 98 General Fund			
State Preschool	\$481,003,000	\$506,965,000	\$25,962,000 ¹¹
Non-Proposition 98 General Fund			
General Child Development	\$464,913,000	476,938,000	\$12,025,000
Migrant Child Care	\$26,056,000	26,742,000	\$686,000
Alternative Payment (AP) Program	\$174,031,000	\$178,501,000	\$4,470,000
CalWORKs Stage 2 (AP)	\$419,286,000	\$357,797,000	(\$61,489,000)
CalWORKs Stage 3 (AP)	\$148,425,000	\$197,526,000	\$49,101,000
Resource and Referral Programs	\$18,688,000	\$18,687,000	(\$1,000)
Handicap Allowance	\$1,452,000	\$1,457,000	\$5,000
CA Child Care Initiative	\$225,000	\$225,000	No change
Quality Improvement	\$49,490,000	\$48,063,000	(\$1,427,000)
Local Planning Councils	\$3,319,000	\$3,319,000	No change
Accounts Payable	\$4,000,000	\$4,000,000	No change
Non-Proposition 98 Sub-total	\$1,309,885,000	\$1,313,255,000	\$3,370,000
Child Care Facilities Revolving Fund	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	No change
Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)	\$0	\$0	No change
Growth	\$0		
Proposition 98 and non-Proposition 98 Sub-total	\$1,795,888,000	\$1,825,220,000	\$29,332,000
Department of Social Services¹²			
CalWORKs Stage 1	\$408,579,000	\$332,800,000	(\$75,779,000)
Learning Supports			
After School and Education Safety Program	\$547,025,000	\$546,965,000	(\$60,000)
21 st Century Community Learning Centers	\$143,949,000 ¹³	\$132,395,000 ¹⁴	(\$11,554,000)
Cal-SAFE Child Care	\$24,778,000	Among categorical programs eliminated due to education finance reform.	
Pregnant Minor Program	\$13,327,000		
Learning Supports Totals	\$729,079,000		(\$11,614,000)
California Community Colleges^{15, 16}			
Cal-WORKs Child Care – Community Colleges	\$9,188,000	\$9,188,000	
Campus Child Care Tax Bailout	\$3,350,000	\$3,350,000 ¹⁷	
State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Development	\$162,000 ¹⁸		
Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Fund	\$11,913,000 ¹⁹	\$11,339,000 ²⁰	-\$365,000

Funding for Quality Activities

The budget also reflects a \$1.4 million decrease in funding for quality improvement activities. Budget language indicates that funding will be “allocated to meet the Federal requirements to improve quality of child care and be used in accordance with the approved California plan for the Federal Child Care and Development Fund.”²¹ The current plan for Federal fiscal year 2012-13 lists 26 quality-funded activities.²² The California Department of Education/Child Development Division expects to complete recommended revisions to the plan in the near future, which will then be submitted for approval to the Department of Finance before funds are expended as required by law.

State Medi-Cal Expansion and Programmatic Shifts

The budget adopts a state-based approach for expanding Medi-Cal under the Federal Affordable Care Act without any realignment of human service programs (such as child care and development) to counties. The California State Budget 2013-14 Summary notes the “costs,

risks and uncertainties” associated with increasing health coverage and improving access to certain services such as mental health care and substance abuse treatment. As such, funding currently allocated to counties for indigent populations may shift to human service programs based on a county by county formula as the state assumes more responsibility for meeting their health care needs.²³

For More Information on 2013-14 Budget Bills: Impact on Children and Families

A number of organizations have developed overviews and analyses of the 2013-14 Budget as it impacts health and human services for children and families, including child care and development as follows:

California Budget Project	www.cbp.org
California Child Care Resource and Referral Network	www.rrnetwork.org
Child Development Policy Institute	www.cdpi.net
Early Edge California	www.earlyedgecalifornia.org
Legislative Analyst's Office	www.lao.ca.gov
ZERO TO THREE – Western Office	www.zerotothree.org/about-us/western-office.html

Questions or comments relating to this policy brief may be referred to Michele Sartell, Los Angeles County Office of Child Care within the Service Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office, by e-mail at msartell@ceo.lacounty.gov or by telephone at (213) 974-5187.

Endnotes:

¹ Brown, Jr. E.G. *California State Budget 2013-14*. State of California, June 27, 2013.

² Information retrieved on July 2, 2013 from Early Edge California website at <http://www.earlyedgecalifornia.org/our-issues/budget/>.

³ AB 110, Chapter 20: Budget Act of 2013, Approved: June 27, 2013; item 6110-194-0890, Provision 5.

⁴ AB 110, Chapter 20: Budget Act of 2013, Approved: June 27, 2013; item 6110-194-0001, Provision 8(f).

⁵ AB 110, Chapter 20: Budget Act of 2013, Approved: June 27, 2013; item 6110-490.

⁶ AB 110, Chapter 20: Budget Act of 2013, Approved: June 27, 2013; see line item veto for 6110-001—0001(9) with respect to Provision 21.

⁷ AB 110, Chapter 20: Budget Act of 2013, Approved: June 27, 2013; see line item veto for 6110-196-0001.

⁸ AB 1464, Chapter 21: 2012-13 Budget, Approved: June 27, 2012; 6110-196-0001.

⁹ AB 1497, Chapter 29: Budget Act of 2012, Approved: June 27, 2012; 6110-194-0001.

¹⁰ AB 110, Chapter 20: Budget Act of 2013, Approved: June 27, 2013; items 6110-194-0001, 6110-196-0001.

¹¹ Expected to provide an additional 6,200 new slots for preschool age children in part-day programs. Of this amount, up to \$5,000,000 is available for the family literacy supplemental grant provided to California State Preschool Programs pursuant to Education Code Section 8238.4.

¹² *California Child Care Programs Local Assistance –All Funds – 2013-14 Governor's Budget*.

¹³ Of the funding allocation to 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in the 2012-13 budget, \$22,382,000 was one-time carryover from prior years payable from the Federal trust fund.

¹⁴ Of the funding allocation to the 21st CLCs, \$10,700,000 is provided in one-time carryover funds to support the existing program.

¹⁵ AB 1497, Chapter 29: Budget Act of 2012, Approved: June 27, 2012; 6870-101-0001(23).

¹⁶ AB 110, Chapter 20: Budget Act of 2013, Approved: June 27, 2013; 6870-101-0001(23).

¹⁷ Of the \$332.8 million allocation to CalWORKs Child Care Stage 1. \$53.9 million is for administration.

¹⁸ AB 1464, Chapter 21: 2012-13 Budget, Approved: June 27, 2012; 6110-199-0890.

¹⁹ AB 110, Chapter 20: Budget Act of 2013, Approved: June 27, 2013; Item 6110-200-0890. This item is supported with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds.

²⁰ Of the funding for RTT-ELC, \$10,150,000 is available for allocation to the local regional leadership consortia to improve upon or develop quality rating improvement systems.

²¹ AB 110, Chapter 20: Budget Act of 2013, Approved: June 27, 2013; Item 6110-194-0001, Provision 1.

²² Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan for State and Territory: California – FFY 2012-13. Retrieved on February 4, 2013, from www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/stateplan1213final.pdf.

²³ Brown, Jr. E.G. *California State Budget 2013-14*. State of California, June 27, 2013.



Learning Community Update

Promoting Child and Family Well-being

Summer 2013

Best Start is Alive and Well

On June 26, 2013, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas hosted a special meeting of the First 5 LA Commission focusing specifically on Best Start implementation. **Best Start, a cornerstone of First 5 LA's Strategic Plan for 2009-15, is intended to improve the lives of young children and their families by positively impacting the systems and environments in which they live, learn and play.** Since its adoption in 2010, Commission support for this place-based initiative has appeared to waver and work in some of the Best Start communities seemed to have stalled. As a result, there was a high level of interest in this meeting and attendees included Commissioners, representatives of community-based agencies, County departments, parents, and community stakeholders.

At the close of the meeting, there was a renewed commitment to Best Start and the Commission adopted the **"Building Stronger Families"** framework. This framework represents important refinements to Best Start, including a focus on intermediate outcomes and strategies informed by research and experience to support the relationship between activities and family- and child-level outcomes, achievable within the proposed five to ten years time-frame, promotes active participation of parents and communities in creating change, and allows measurement of progress.

Building Stronger Families Framework

Research by the Center for the Study of Social Policy has shown that families thrive when the Protective Factors are robust in their lives and communities. **Strong families provide the context for children's optimal growth and development.** The *Building Stronger Families* framework incorporates the Protective Factors into the *core family results*:

1. Families demonstrate resilience, parental knowledge and positive relationships that support their children's social and emotional competence.
2. Families participate in positive social networks that provide multiple opportunities for mutual support and leadership development.
3. Families access concrete supports that meet their needs.

Similarly, families thrive in the context of neighborhoods and communities that support parents in raising their children by enhancing their social connections and offering concrete supports and opportunities. Best Start will work in communities to develop the following *core community results*:

1. Neighborhoods and communities establish a common vision and act collectively to improve the policies, services and environments that build family protective factors and influence the availability of concrete services.

Continued on next page

Strengthening Families Learning Community Members

Chief Executive Office
 Child Care Resource Center
 Department of Children and Family Services
 First 5 LA
 Friends of the Family
 Department of Health
 Department of Mental Health
 Department of Parks and Recreation
 Department of Public Health
 Department of Public Social Services
 Los Angeles County Office of Education
 Magnolia Community Initiative
 Policy Roundtable for Child Care
 Probation Department
 Public Library
 In partnership with
 Casey Family Programs

The Protective Factors

*are the foundation of the
 Strengthening Families
 Approach*

- ◆ Parental resilience
- ◆ Social connections
- ◆ Knowledge of parenting and child development
- ◆ Concrete support in times of need
- ◆ Social and emotional competence of children

Research has shown that strong families thrive when the Protective Factors are robust in their lives and communities.

2. Neighborhoods and communities establish and sustain opportunities for families to interact regularly in positive social networks and safe community spaces that encourage social interaction and promote healthy living.
3. Neighborhoods and communities develop and sustain services and supports that meet family needs, including high quality services and opportunities for educational success.

Accountability Framework

First 5 LA will define and use an Accountability framework anchored in the core family and community results in order to ensure that the investment in the *Building Stronger Families* framework is making a positive difference. This Accountability framework includes four levels:

Level One: Population Conditions – Monitoring population-based indicators for Los Angeles County and each of the Best Start communities. While these broad measures such as health status, poverty and environmental conditions are beyond the scope of Best Start, they provide stakeholders with an understanding of the context.

Level Two: Core Results for Communities – Tracking progress toward the core community results and movement toward collective action that contributes to the building of stronger families.

Level Three: Core Results for Families – Tracking progress made in strengthening family capacities, social connections and concrete supports.

Level Four: Performance Measures and Learning – Tracking performance milestones and understanding what was done, who was involved, and what happened.

Implementation Considerations

It is anticipated that under the *Building Stronger Families* framework, First 5 LA will continue to support activities in the areas of parent/community collaboration, organizational capacity building, and policy and systems changes. In addition, a “direct family strengthening services” category may be added to support the *Building Stronger Families* framework. Should funding become available under this new category, specific parameters will be established to guide funding decisions.

Next Steps

Consistent with Board direction, First 5 LA staff will be reporting back in September on three things: 1) an implementation timeline; 2) an initial analysis of community partnership readiness; and 3) a recommended approach to Best Start community plan funding. More information on the results of the June 26th and the upcoming September 12th meetings are available at www.first5LA.org.

Best Start communities:

Central Long Beach
 Metro LA
 Compton
 East Compton
 East Los Angeles (includes City Terrace, Commerce and parts of Monterey Park)
 El Monte
 South El Monte
 Lancaster
 Pacoima
 Palmdale
 Panorama City
 South Los Angeles/ Broadway-Manchester
 South Los Angeles/ West Athens
 Southeast L.A. County Cities (including Bell, Cudahy, Bell Gardens and Maywood)
 Watts
 Willowbrook
 Wilmington

I now see the goal of Best Start is not a band aid; it's a cure.

- Best Start Parent

Recommended Viewing

THE RAISING OF AMERICA is producing an ensemble of documentaries and multimedia tools linking early child development to a more prosperous and equitable nation. The television documentary for PBS broadcast and the shorter film will be supported by parent guides, discussion guides, handouts, action toolkits and other companion materials. For more information, visit www.first5LA.org or the www.first5LA.org website.

How do We Know if We are Making a Difference?

We are working hard, our hearts are in the right place, yet it is not always easy to answer the question – are we making a difference? Are we working as effectively as we can with children and families? On a good day – we offer a resounding yes... and on the not such a good day we may just duck the question all together.

The California Network of Family Strengthening Networks (CNFSN) confronted this challenge and produced the *Standards for Quality for Family Strengthening & Support*. These Standards are designed to be used by a broad range of programs, and can inform the processes for planning, implementing and assessing the quality of services.

CNFSN devoted 18 months to developing and vetting the standards. This was seen as a strategic investment towards defining and promoting quality practice for organizations working with families. The work paid off and the standards were unanimously approved by the CNFSN membership in 2012. The standards build on the work of the Center for the Study of Social Policy and Family Support America and are organized into the following five sections:

- **Family Centeredness:** Working with a family-centered approach that values and recognizes families as integral to the program.
- **Family Strengthening:** Utilizing a family strengthening approach to support families to be strong, healthy and safe, thereby promoting their optimal development.
- **Embracing Diversity:** Acknowledging and respecting families' diversity, supporting their participation in a diverse society, as well as engaging in ongoing learning and adaption to diversity.
- **Community Building:** Contributing to building a strong and healthy community by facilitating families' social connections, developing their leadership skills, and by collaborating with other programs.
- **Evaluation:** Looking at areas of program strength, as well as areas for further development, in order to guide continuous quality improvement and achieve positive results for families.

Drilling down within these sections, there are 17 standards and each standard has a set of indicators for "minimum quality" and "high quality". The accompanying Program Self-Assessment Tool is designed to be used in reflective processes that asks how the minimum and high quality indicators are met, what potential action items are related to each indicator and, finally, mapping where the program falls on the continuum with respect to each indicator, ranging from "Not yet addressed" to "Meets Minimum and Meets High Quality".

The standards go a long way to connecting theory to practice and also connect practice to the "movement for social change that urges policymakers, service providers, parents and employers to take responsibility for improving the lives of children and families and for ensuring that they get what they need to succeed." For more information on these standards, including certification training opportunities, visit the California Network of Family Strengthening Networks website at www.cnfsn.org.

More Resources

- The Center for the Study of Social Policy recently released *Core Meanings of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors* available at www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/2013/Core-Meanings-of-the-SF-Protective-Factors.pdf, a companion piece to the new *Protective Factors Briefs*, downloadable from www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/2013/SF-All-5-Protective-Factors.pdf. The documents delve deeper into the meaning of each of the Protective Factors.
- The May 2013 edition of the ZERO TO THREE Journal is all about early childhood mental health care and features a strategy to support professionals working with young children and their families across all disciplines. To order, visit www.zerotothree.org.

Affordable Care Act

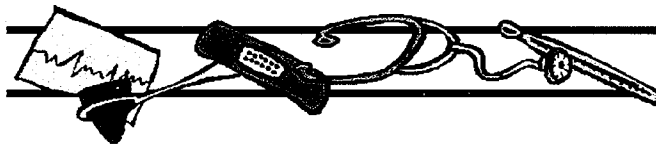
At the June 18, 2013 meeting of the Strengthening Families Learning Community, Karen Bernstein with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services presented information on local implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Committee members walked away from this presentation with new information and a much deeper appreciation for the administrative challenges confronting the Department of Health Services!

The ACA will provide many families with access to health services, a critically important concrete support that has been out of reach for many. Starting in 2014, Medi-Cal eligibility will expand to all adults under 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) who are citizens or legal residents for five years. Children up to 250 percent will be eligible for Medi-Cal (children currently enrolled in Healthy Families are now being transitioned into Medi-Cal). Individuals with income between 133 and 400 percent FPL will be eligible to participate in the Health Benefit Exchange under "Covered California", which will offer different plan levels through existing insurance providers. Subsidies will be based on family size and income.

Additional ACA provisions effective January 1, 2014 will prohibit annual coverage limits, may not exclude adults with pre-existing conditions, will limit waiting periods for coverage to 90 days, and will maintain Medicaid eligibility for foster children aging out of the child welfare system through age 26. Other ACA provisions are already helping families. Parents now receive coverage for their children up to age 26, there is a prohibition on lifetime benefits limits, and insurers may not refuse coverage based on pre-existing conditions in children.

Because the ACA includes expanded benefits for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder services, collaborative efforts between DHS, Public Health and Mental Health are underway. There is much more to come on this issue and we will bring that information as it becomes available.

Covered California is California's new insurance marketplace through which millions of Californians will be able to choose affordable, high quality health coverage. Information on the various health care plans is currently available for review at <http://www.coveredca.com>.



Upcoming Events

The Center for Early Childhood Development, a project of the Los Angeles Child Care Guidance Center, is offering a *Training Opportunity: Core Competency: Brain Development, Attachment and Trauma*—on August 22, 2013 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Early interventionists, clinicians, and others who work with children 0-5 are encouraged to attend. Cost to attend is \$109 (\$99 before July 31, 2013). For more information and to register, visit www.eitraining.org.

Grandparents as Parents will be hosting their 11th Annual Professional Conference, "Trauma Informed Care: Through the Lens of Relative Caregivers" on October 21, 2013 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Special keynote speaker is Father "Greg" Boyle. Cost to attend is \$80 (\$70 by August 20, 2013). For more information and to register, call (818) 264-0880 or e-mail Carmen Garcia at cgarcia@grandparentsasparents.org.

Your Thoughts

Learning Community Update is a publication of the Office of Child Care located within the Service Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office. Comments? Send to msartell@ceo.lacounty.gov.